

CYNTHIA SCHMIDT

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Honorable Senator Harp
Representative Geragosian
State of Connecticut Appropriations Committee

Dear Sirs

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter of testimony and true gratitude. My name is Cynthia Lee Schmidt. I reside at 16 Windham Street, Apt. 7, Willimantic, CT. I am a single mother of two grown children and I am currently in recovery from alcohol.

I am a believer and a huge advocate for the purpose and work that the Connecticut Community for Addiction and Recovery CCAR does. CCAR has played and still plays a vital role in my recovery since I first walked through its doors as a still using alcoholic in 2006. Since then my life has changed drastically and for the better.

I have suffered from active and at one time almost deadly alcoholism since the suicide death of my younger brother Kevin since Thanksgiving, 1997. His death was the beginning of many traumas in my life but the event that started it all. If I had known an organization like CCAR existed this early on in my addiction, I am certain that a lot of bad things in my life would have never happened.

Through the years my alcoholism escalated and so did bad things in life, in general. I am a 16 year veteran of the United States Armed Forces and was forced to end service in 2001 when my daughter was molested by my second husband. This was the pinnacle time for my addiction and it spiraled out of control. Again, if I had only known about CCAR and people like Diane Potvin with her experience, things may have turned out differently. CCAR is now my **LIFELINE** and the courage of its staff and recoveries continuously inspires me that life can be and is better.

Unfortunately, as a result of my alcoholism I chose to drink and drive not once but three times. I was arrested, convicted and incarcerated. Although the events were unfortunate and the price was grave, I have no regrets because of where I am today thanks to CCAR and all the services that the Department of Mental Health DHMAS provides. The services are invaluable. I have benefited because thanks to DHMAS I was finally correctly diagnosed with Bi-Polar Disorder Axis I, I was afforded the opportunity to have a home to live in when I got out of York Correctional Facility due to the availability of Sober Housing.

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I receive my medications on a timely basis and I can look forward to working on my problems at weekly individual therapy sessions. Just recently I was blessed to receive my own apartment I now have my own apartment through HUD housing.

I am a much happier and productive person thanks to all these opportunities. Once again I cannot say enough about CCAR's role in my recovery. I started volunteering at CCAR in April of 2008 and I am still a volunteer. Being a volunteer at CCAR makes me feel so good about myself. I feel like I matter and that I am doing something to give back all that CCAR has given me. CCAR gives me a pride I thought I had lost when I was in active addiction. I am also trusted and looked up to at CCAR. My Volunteer Supervisor trusts me with a key and an alarm code to lock up and open CCAR. My creativity is utilized and freely given when I am assigned the task of creating fliers, signs and promotional material for the center.

I believe that all the services offered through DHMAS and CCAR centers all around the state are necessary and vital to the recovery and mental health of millions just like me. I also think that these services should be widely publicized and funded as well as more CCAR centers being created so that all people who struggle with addiction can have a safe haven to call "HOME".

Sincerely,


Cynthia Schmidt